

PROPOSAL EVALUATION

Proposition 50, Chapter 8 Integrated Regional Water Management Planning Grant

PIN	5536	COUNTY	Merced
APPLICANT	Merced County Economic Development Corporation	AMOUNT REQUESTED	\$500,000
PROJECT TITLE	Merced County Regional Utilities Infrastructure Plan (MCRUIP)	TOTAL PROJECT COST	\$3,000,000

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Merced County RUIP project undertakes a feasibility study and business plan to identify short term options to accommodate growth, design a new regional wastewater treatment plant to alleviate capacity and technology constraints, and increase opportunities for economic development and housing. Electrical power generation is an ancillary component of the project. The project will help retain thousands of threatened jobs employed by food processing enterprises, improve water quality, and ensure an adequate source of energy to serve residential and business demand. Regional treatment offers scale economies to improve efficiency and builds upon the collaborative strengths of the region's communities. Merced's business and community leaders agree that regional utilities are the top economic development priority. The San Joaquin Valley Federal Interagency Task Force has specifically identified and endorsed the Merced County project as its primary 'Fourth Initiative' project.

WORK PLAN - Scoring will be based on whether the applicant has a detailed and specific work plan that adequately documents the proposal. Weighting factor is 3.

Score: 6

Comment: The applicant's proposal is a feasibility study and business plan to improve utilities infrastructure (wastewater treatment and electric generation) and stimulate economic development (business and residential growth) in the northern Merced County. The work plan, work items, schedule, and budget, although nicely presented, lacked detail. While work items were broadly discussed, no deliverables were identified. The budget was summarized by task and fund sources but it did not provide rates, hours or units, or other documentation to justify proposal estimates.

DESCRIPTION OF REGION - Scoring will be based on whether the applicant has presented a detailed and specific description that adequately documents the region. Weighting factor is 1.

Score: 2

Comment: The applicant described the planning region as North Merced County. The applicant does not clearly address how the area would be appropriate for IRWM. The quality and quantity of water resources of the region were not described. Majority of the discussion was focused on the economic conditions of the region's businesses and communities. Sensitive habitats or impaired water bodies were not discussed. The map (a GIS shape file) did not identify jurisdictions, boundaries, water-related facilities, or water sources. There was no mention of benefits of defining this region versus individual local efforts.

OBJECTIVES - Scoring will be based on whether the applicant has presented detailed and specific planning objectives. Weighting factor is 2.

Score: 2

Comment: Major water related issues requirements of water supply, groundwater management, ecosystem restoration, and water quality were not discussed. There was no process presented to determine the major water related objectives. The proposed IRWMP was only concerned with meeting State standards and regulations in the design and suitability of technology of the wastewater treatment plant, as part of a larger Regional Utilities Infrastructure Plan (RUIP). Applicant did not address statewide priorities.

INTEGRATION OF WATER MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES - Scoring will be based on whether the applicant has adequately documented how water management strategies will be integrated. Weighting factor is 2.

Score: 2

Comment: There was no inclusion of multiple water management strategies or a technical process for determining water management strategies. The proposal and work plan is for the design of and plan for a regional wastewater treatment plant. The applicant failed to demonstrate integration of water management strategies, and the proposal does not meet the minimum IRWM standards.

IMPLEMENTATION - Scoring will be based on whether the applicant has adequately detailed plan implementation. Weighting factor is 2.

Score: 2

Comment: The schedule did not include plans for implementation beyond adoption of the IRWMP or a process to determine such a schedule. The RUIP was described as a major priority of two planning bodies in Merced County (Merced County Association of Governments and San Joaquin Valley Federal Interagency Task Force), but it was unclear what the institutional structure would be. The Task Force was mentioned as the mechanism to monitor performance, but details were not provided.

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IMPACTS AND BENEFITS - Scoring will be based on whether the applicant has adequately presented and documented the impacts and benefits of the Plan. Weighting factor is 2.

Score: 2

Comment: The application focused on economic impacts, market analysis, and benefits for businesses regarding the proposed regional wastewater treatment plant. Despite the discussion on needs, no impacts or benefits were discussed in the context of the improving water quality or water supply of municipalities or communities as a result of a new wastewater treatment plant. CEQA and environmental compliance were only mentioned as line items in the budget and work plan. A large part of proposal's work plan and budget will go towards preparation of an EIR.

DATA AND TECHNICAL ANALYSIS - Scoring will be based on whether the applicant has presented detailed and specific data and technical analysis components of the proposal. Weighting factor is 1.

Score: 2

Comment: Applicant discussed the following data but did not provide documentation or actual data to support the proposal: existing and projected volumes for wastewater treatment, population growth statistics, housing projections, and industrial growth statistics. The work plan included a line item for data collection and analysis but provided no details. No technical studies were referenced or planned to demonstrate support for the proposal or if they would be relevant to this proposal.

DATA MANAGEMENT - Scoring will be based on whether the applicant has presented detailed and specific data management procedures. Weighting factor is 1.

Score: 2

Comment: The work plan included a line item for data collection but no details were provided: 1) on who would be responsible for data collection and management; or 2) the types of data to be managed. The dissemination of data to stakeholders, agencies, and the public was proposed via a newsletter, printed publication, radio, and website links. No discussion was presented in the work plan on how the data would support statewide needs.

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT - Scoring will be based on whether the applicant has adequately documented stakeholder involvement concerns. Weighting factor is 1.

Score: 2

Comment: Cooperating entities were listed in the FAAST questionnaire but they were only mentioned in proposal. A list of stakeholders was not provided with proposal. There was no process to address environmental justice, and the following statement was found in the work plan to stakeholder involvement in IRWMP development: "Conduct regular information forums, presentations and working sessions with stakeholders and public." The work plan had language that would suggest stakeholder involvement, but no documentation to support it.

DISADVANTAGE COMMUNITIES - Scoring will be based on whether the applicant has adequately documented disadvantaged community concerns. Weighting factor is 1.

Score: 1

Comment: The applicant stated project area was not a DAC based on median household income.

RELATION TO LOCAL PLANNING - Scoring will be based on whether the applicant has adequately documented the Plan's relationship to local planning efforts. Weighting factor is 1.

Score: 2

Comment: Although the applicant discussed local municipal and general planning documents, they failed to demonstrate how these documents would form the foundation for the proposal or support an IRWMP. The applicant stated the RUIP would incorporate IRWM strategies, but there was no documentation to support this statement.

AGENCY COORDINATION - Scoring will be based on whether the applicant has adequately documented agency coordination issues. Weighting factor is 1.

Score: 2

Comment: The work plan included coordination with local entities and a task force, but it did not discuss any coordination with the State or federal regulatory agencies other than during the design of the wastewater treatment plant. No stakeholder list was provided but the Cities of Atwater and Livingston, Merced County, and representatives from housing developers and food processing industries are mentioned in the application. There was no supporting documentation to demonstrate a history of agency coordination.

TOTAL SCORE: 27